

Between the three of us we've got it covered by Jancys-Blue-Bayou

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Summary: Joyce can't make Jonathan feel better, so she calls Nancy for help. Post-Mindflayer, Nancy and Jonathan fluffy angst comfort, and Nancy and Joyce bonding.

Between the three of us we've got it covered

"Wheeler residence."

"Hello Karen, it's Joyce."

"Oh hello Joyce! How are you?"

"Oh..."

How to answer that question? Just a few days ago the world almost ended, she almost lost Will again. She did lose Bob. Will was slowly recovering, the volatile temperature changes had left him with a fever and a cold. Plus there was the burn on his abdomen. But he was, overall, considering the circumstances, fine. He'd been wracked with guilt at first, but after multiple assurances from her and Jonathan that it wasn't his fault in any way, shape or form, he seemed to have accepted the truth of their statements. She herself felt like she was in a daze, concerning Bob. It didn't feel real. Maybe it still hadn't fully hit her. For now she tried to focus more on her boys instead of wallowing in despair and sorrow. Trying to keep her sanity. Succeeding only partially, she thought.

To be honest though she's almost more worried about her eldest now. Jonathan had refused to go back to school yet, insisting on taking care of both Will and herself instead. He in his turn was wracked by guilt because he happened to not be there when that thing took hold of Will. And in contrast to Will he wouldn't accept their pleas that it wasn't his fault. He hadn't known, he couldn't have known, but still blamed himself. She knew her son. He always put himself last and Will first, and her just after Will. And he always put himself down. In a way it could almost infuriate her, that he never cut himself some slack, never could admit to himself that he was the amazing and selfless person he was. He did everything for Will and her, but never thought it was enough. He was such a caring individual, pouring out love for Will and her. The way he takes care of them, talks and listens to them, is how his unconditional love and care is expressed. Himself, his own feelings, he clamps up about.

But she'd learnt something new this weekend. His intensely caring

nature had definitely expanded past his family. Of course she'd always known he was caring in general, even though he was shy and introverted with other people and sometimes claimed that he didn't like people, he couldn't help but care. Just not as intensely for most as for Will and her. But the events of last fall had thrown him together with Nancy Wheeler and somehow again last week. She's not totally clear on all the details, just that the reason for Jonathan's absence was that he'd gone with Nancy to "get justice against the Lab". It was obvious something more had developed between them by the time they got back, but considering the more important things going on she didn't say anything about it. But she sure noticed, even with Will being her number one priority, the closeness between them. The look of relief and gratitude on Jonathan's face when Nancy got in the car with them and said she was going with them to get the monster out of Will. The way he buried his face in Nancy's shoulder when he couldn't bear to see Will in such pain (she couldn't either. But she just had to do it, to get it out of her son). The way they looked at each other afterwards, when it had all calmed down. She knew Jonathan cared intensely for Nancy. And it looked like she cared just as much about him. So, out of ideas for how to get Jonathan to stop beating himself up about not being there when Will turned ill, she hopes maybe Nancy could help.

But Karen, she assumed, had no idea about anything. So she tried to sound normal, casual, when she answered. "Just fine, thank you, how are you?"

"Good. How is Will? Mike mentioned something about a pretty serious flu?"

"Oh, he is all better now, thank you. Anyway, I was just calling to um... well, is Nancy home?"

"Nancy? Why yes, she's up in her room." Karen answered, sounding confused.

"Could I speak to her?"

"You want to speak to Nancy?" Karen now sounded very surprised.

"Yes."

"Um, sure... about what?"

"Uh... well, about Jonathan."

"Jonathan?"

"Yes, um... well, I think it's best if she explains it to you herself, but could I talk to her?"

"Oh, sure," Karen answered, sounding both hesitant and intrigued.

Jonathan hadn't been in school today either. She hadn't expected him to be, but was still a little bit disappointed. But mostly worried. She hadn't talked to him since he drove her and Mike home after everything. He'd been an odd mix of relief, guilt and worry. She just tried to support him. Before they separated she told him to call her if he need anything, but she hadn't heard from him in three days. She'd thought about calling him several times already and now it was all she could think about. She didn't want to intrude. Will was probably still not well, and Bob was dead. But she wanted to be there for him. She knew he blamed himself for not being there when the Mindflayer took hold of Will. But he didn't know, he couldn't know. He'd been with her. Helping her. He didn't blame her, right? She didn't think so. He had been receptive to her comfort when they were together. When he whispered apologies to Will's unconscious body she'd put a hand on his shoulder. It had seemed to steady him in that moment. He didn't pull away when she took his hand. He had clung to her when Will's pain became too much for him. Maybe he just had trouble to reach out, to actually ask for comfort? He was always the one to comfort others, asking for nothing in return. She was willing to bet he was now in overdrive to take care of his mom and Will and continuing to blame himself for something that wasn't his fault.

"Nancy!" Her mother calls from downstairs.

"Yes?" She calls back while descending the stairs.

"Phone for you."

"Oh. Who is it?" She asks, trying to keep her hope down and sound

neutral.

"Joyce Byers," her mother informs and gives her a curious look.

"Oh!" She quickly takes the receiver and shoos her mother out of the kitchen for privacy.

"Hello, Mrs. Byers?"

"Hi Nancy, how are you?" Joyce answers in a low voice, obviously trying to not be heard by someone.

"Uh, I'm fine, how are you? How's Will? How's..."

"Well uh, we're hanging in there. Will's doing better. But um, I'm worried about Jonathan. He doesn't give himself a moment's peace, he's so worried about myself and Will that I'm worried for him. And he blames himself for being gone when... it happened."

"He shouldn't," she says quickly.

"I know."

"He wasn't with you because he was helping me. Even though he didn't have to. If anything it's my fault he wasn't-"

"No, it's not your fault. It's no one's fault."

"Right."

"And Nancy. Thank you. Thank you for what you did. You saved Will."

"No... I don't know, it wasn't me, I mean you, you did... I just..." She stammers, feeling a bit overwhelmed by Mrs. Byers heartfelt thanks.

"Thank you," Mrs. Byers insists.

"Okay," she answers, trying to process it.

"And thank you for whatever it is you did to the Lab."

"... my pleasure."

"And thank you for being there for Jonathan. It means the world. Not just to him."

"No problem. I mean... I want to be there, for him. I uh... he's always there, for me. I told him to call if he needed anything but I know that's not easy for him and... I just... I like him a lot, and I care about him. A lot," she admits to Mrs. Byers before she can even think to much of it.

"That means a lot to me, Nancy. I'm glad. And I know he cares a lot about you too. And... he needs you. So that's why I called, I'm getting nowhere with him and I was just wondering if you maybe could come over and talk to him?"

"Oh! Yes, absolutely! I wanted to call but I didn't want to intrude or-"

"Sweetie you'll never intrude, you're always welcome."

"Oh. Good to know."

"Yes. Um, I don't know exactly what the deal is between you two but just know that whatever it is, I support it."

"Oh. Great. Thanks," she says, thinking that she's not really sure either right now. "Also um, I'm so sorry about Bob," she then says, she has to acknowledge it.

"Thanks," Mrs. Byers answer after going quiet for a second.

"Are you okay?" She asks.

"Yeah, thanks. Sorry it's just... it's been rough."

"Sorry. Is there anything I can do?"

"No, sweetheart, but thank you. I will manage."

"Okay. So um, I'll see you in a bit, then?"

"Great. By the way you may have to explain it somewhat to your mother though, she was curious why I was calling for you, I just said it was about Jonathan."

"Oh, okay..." she answers, processing the information before finishing. "... good. I'll talk to her and then come right over."

"Great, see you soon."

"Bye."

"So, what was that about?" Her mother asks as soon as she's hung up the phone and walked out into the hall to put on her coat. She thinks for a second and decides being open and as honest as possible is her best strategy, her mother will appreciate honesty.

"Oh, well I have something I need to tell you. I'm seeing Jonathan."

That's the best way to describe it to her mom. In reality she's not a hundred percent anymore what exactly they are. In the car on the way back from Murray's they had talked a bit about it. She had told him that she wanted to be with him, for real. He had said the same. But that was before they came home to the world ending. She knew where she stood. But she wasn't sure where his mind was at the moment.

"Okay," her mom answers slowly. "What happened to Steve?"

"Nothing, just... it didn't work out. He wasn't right for me. Jonathan... is."

"Oh. Well I can't say I'm surprised, I suspected as much when you had him over to... study, last week," her mother answer and gives her a look.

"Um... just for the record we didn't do anything then... I mean, we studied," she insists, flustered.

"Okay, Honey. Anyway, if you're happy I'm happy for you. I've always thought that Jonathan is a very nice boy."

"Good... so, uh, Mrs. Byers invited me for dinner tonight. Can I go?"

"Sure, but you must invite Jonathan over for dinner here soon."

"Okay, I will. Bye."

"Hi," Mrs. Byers greets and embrace her.

"Hi," she mirrors and reciprocates the hug.

"Thanks for coming. He's in his room," Mrs. Byers informs her while she takes off her coat.

"Okay. Hey Will, how are you?" She asks the boy who's lying under a blanket on the couch in the living room watching TV.

"Hi Nancy. I'm good. Better."

"Good, I'm glad. Is the um... burn, okay? Sorry I had to do that."

"It's fine. I'm glad you did."

She knocks on his bedroom door. She can hear music playing inside. After hearing an "It's open" coming from inside she enters. He hastily sits up from where he was lying on his bed when he sees that it's her, he was clearly expecting his mom. He lowers the volume on the music.

"Hi," she says.

"Hey, I uh, didn't know you were coming over."

"Your mom called and invited me over."

"She did?"

"Yeah. Can I sit down?"

"Yeah, of course."

She sits down next to him on the bed.

"Joy Division?" She asks, taking a shot regarding the music.

"The Birthday Party," he lets her know. "Good guess, though," he adds with a tiny smirk. She'll take it.

"So, how are you?" She asks.

"Fine, I mean Will's gotten a bit better. I don't know about mom, I try to-"

"Yeah, he looks better. But how are *you*?" She interrupts, stressing the last word.

"Fine?"

"Okay," she says shortly.

"Nance, are you okay?" He asks.

"I'm worried about you," she lets him know.

"I'm worried about my mom and Will," he retorts.

"I'm worried about them too, and your mom is worried about you. So I think between the three of us we've got it covered."

"What are you worried about?"

"How you're dealing with everything."

"How I'm dealing with it?! I'm just trying to take care of them, Will is sick and she's not dealing with Bob-" He starts, a little bit agitated.

"I know. They know. They appreciate it. That's not the thing though," she cuts him off with.

"What's the thing then?"

"You have to stop blaming yourself for not being there."

He doesn't say anything to that, looking away instead. So she continues.

"It's not your fault. You didn't know, there was no way for you to know. And there's nothing you could've done. I know it, your mom knows it, Will knows it, hell I think deep down even you know it. You have to stop beating yourself up about it. You weren't there because you were with me. You came with me even though you didn't have to. There's nothing you could've done if you'd been there. But you coming with me meant everything. I couldn't have done it

without you. I needed you. That's why you came with me. Because you care. You care so much about others, about us. It's amazing. But if you could just care about yourself just a little bit too. Remember what you told me the day after Tina's party? You've got to cut yourself some slack. I know you want to protect us, for nothing bad to ever happen, but it's impossible for one man to protect everyone, even if he's you. Nothing that's happened is your fault. Nothing," she repeats for emphasis, looking deep into his eyes.

Suddenly he throws his arms around her and buries his face in the crook of her neck. The sudden movement catches her offguard for just a splitsecond before she puts her arms around him, one hand around his back, the other stroking his hair. She's brought back to that night at Hopper's cabin, when he clung to her when Will's agony became too much and she held him and wished she could relieve him of all the pain.

"It's not your fault," she repeats, softly brushing her lips against his ear. She can feel him relax his shoulders a little, some tension leaving them as he lets out a heavy sigh. "It's not," she whispers again. She feels him nod slightly against her shoulder. She pulls back slightly to put her forehead against his instead.

"Okay?"

"Okay."

"Good," she says and brushes her lips against his.

They shift, sitting up against the headboard side by side. She takes one of his hands and traces his scar with her finger.

"I'm worried about my mom," he says.

"I know."

"She's not dealing with Bob's..." he trails off.

"Maybe she is. Everyone grieves differently."

"I know. But she won't even talk about it."

"I don't know..."

"What?"

"Maybe she can't talk about it too much yet. But when she called me I told her how sorry I was about Bob and asked if there was anything I could do. She said thank you and that she'd manage. That's something, at least."

"I guess..."

"She knows she can talk to you about it. That she doesn't have to bottle it up like..." she trails off.

"Like you had to," he fills in. "I'm sorry you had to do that."

"Thanks. But it's my fault. I retreated and tried to bury it. I could've come to you sooner. Should have. You would've listened."

"I would've," he nods. "But I'm sorry too, I should've come to you."

"The important thing is that you're here now," she says and lays her head on his shoulder.

"And you're here," he notes.

"Yeah. And I'm not going anywhere."

"I don't want you to," he says softly.

"Good."

They sit in a comfortable silence for a minute.

"Can I make a suggestion? Regarding your mom and the whole grieving thing?" She asks.

"Sure."

"Go to school? Not for me. But for yourself. Or if not for yourself do it for your mom."

"How... why?"

"Because I think she needs some normalcy. And some space. I know you want to take care of her but the longer you stay home the more worried she becomes about you, I think. Your routine returning to normal would give her some peace of mind."

"I just want to be there for her..." He begins.

"I know! And she knows," she quickly answers. "And you still will be," she insists. "Just... think about it?"

"Okay," he says quietly.

"Good. By the way... your mom said she doesn't really know what this is but she supports it," she says, gesturing between them.

"Oh. Good. Um... what exactly is this?"

"I don't know, I guess we haven't really talked about it," she laughs. "I just want to be with you," she says earnestly.

"I want to be with you," he softly answers.

"So I guess we're dating?"

"Yes. I mean uh, if you want to, I mean."

"I just told you I want to," she smirks.

"Oh, right," he laughs nervously.

She kisses him for the first time in days and instantly knows that she can't ever again go so many days without feeling his lips against hers.

"Glad we cleared that up because I've already told my mom I'm seeing you," she laughs after they break apart.

"What?" He chuckles.

"Well she answered the phone when your mom called and asked to speak with me so I had to tell her something!"

"How'd she take it?"

"Good. She's always liked you anyway."

"She has?"

"Yes?"

"Wow, I just thought she was being polite."

"Stop selling yourself short," she demands before kissing him again.

"Okay."

She slides down, lying down with her head on his pillow. He follows and lies next to her.

"Um, on the whole dating thing, you know I've never actually been... on a date. I don't know what to-" he stammers out.

"Yes you have," she answers.

"What?" He looks confused.

"I'm counting this as a date," she says.

"You are?" He chuckles.

"Yes."

"For dates, aren't I supposed to like take you out or?"

"You're here, I'm here. That constitutes a date I think. And I think it's going very well. I mean, we've already moved it into the bedroom," she waggles her eyebrows at him, making him chuckle.

"By the way, did you get in trouble with your mom?" He asks after a minute.

"Nah, she really believed I was at Allie's the whole weekend."

"Nice. And um, how's it been, at school?"

"Lonely, without you. And people are idiots."

"Is it...?" He starts and doesn't need to finish since she knows just what he means.

"Well, uh, let's just say I guess I kind of created a scene at Tina's party which people remember. And our absence didn't go unnoticed and people like to assume... and they're assholes."

"Do they know that you and Steve...?"

"Yep."

"And that you and I...?"

"Yep. Or, I mean. They don't know the true version. But uh, I guess their assumptions were kind of right, concerning... you know."

"Is it bad? I mean, are they... like last time they thought you and me...?"

"I don't care," she shrugs.

"Nance, I don't want you to-" he starts but she cuts him off.

"I don't care," she repeats, looking at him. "You know, when you've uncovered a government conspiracy and exorcised a monster out of a boy, it's really hard to find the energy to give a shit about what Carol writes on my locker," she adds.

He smiles a little at that. She smirks and shakes her head.

"My life is absurd. What did you do for Halloween, Nancy? Oh, first I got embarrassingly drunk and spilled punch over my Risky Business outfit and broke up with my boyfriend then I infiltrated a shady government facility, then I survived what looked like the apocalypse, *again*, and helped exorcise a monster from my new boyfriend's little brother, then I went to school and it said 'SLUT' on my locker. Life's funny what way."

For some reason that makes him laugh. Really, really laugh. It takes a second for it to start, like he had to consider the simply accurate description of her life she just gave. Then the full absurdity of her life, their life, must've hit him. It starts with an almost inaudible

giggle, dimples forming on his cheeks. The giggle grows and grows to a fullblown laughing fit and he can't seem to stop. It draws her in too, and soon she can't stop laughing either and after awhile they're simply laughing at how much they're laughing. She's never seen him laugh like that before. Not at all actually, at most she's been able to draw some chuckles out of him over the past year. Every time she did it made her heart flutter. Now she thinks she can actually feel it swell in her chest at the sound of him.

The door opens when they're lying next to each other both practically squirming with laughter. Mrs. Byers stands in the doorway, puts one hand on the doorframe and looks at them curiously. Nancy can barely see through tears of laughter but she tries to control herself and hits Jonathan on the arm to get him to do the same but it only provokes him to another fit of giggles which in turn sends her off again.

"What's so funny?" Mrs. Byers asks with a smile when they've eventually managed to collect themselves somewhat.

"Nothing," they both answer at the same time. She has to bite her cheek to not break out laughing again at that and Jonathan wipes away tears from his red face.

"What's up?" He asks his mother.

"I just came to say that dinner is ready."

"Oh, okay. We'll be right out," he answers. Mrs. Byers drums her fingers against the doorframe and smiles at them both again before walking away.

They stand up. She looks at him and grins. He looks back at her somewhat shyly all of the sudden. She states the truest fact she's learned today.

"Your dimples are cute."

It makes him blush slightly. She stands on her tiptoes and presses a kiss right on one of the dimples in question. He turns crimson.

He takes her hand and leads her to the kitchen where his family is

waiting.